

CHAPTER 37
EQUIPMENT DISTRIBUTION PROGRAM

199—37.1(477C) Policy and purpose. The board has authority under Iowa Code section 477C.4 to plan, establish, administer, and promote a program to secure, finance, and distribute telecommunications devices for the deaf. The needs for equipment to allow persons with communication impairments to use the telephone are not being satisfied in Iowa at this time. A reasonable distribution program is desirable. All customers will benefit when access to the telephone system is available to more persons. The existing dual party relay service will be more fully utilized when more persons have the equipment necessary to gain access to the relay service.

The equipment distribution program will be limited by periodic budget amounts set by the board. When the budgeted amounts for a period are committed or expended, no further vouchers for equipment will be issued until the next period when the board budgets additional amounts.

199—37.2(477C) Program structure. The equipment distribution program will be conducted by a program administrator chosen by the board. Distribution of equipment will be made through a voucher system utilizing private vendors for equipment purchases. Vouchers to pay part or, depending upon the price, all of the cost of equipment will be issued by the program administrator to eligible recipients. After purchase using a voucher, the recipient will be the permanent owner of the equipment and responsible for enforcement of any warranties and for any repairs.

37.2(1) Amount. The voucher will state a standard amount for a particular piece of equipment.

a. The standard amount shall be determined and updated periodically by the program administrator.

b. The standard amount shall be 95 percent of the average retail market price for the piece of equipment, unless the retail market price is more than \$1,000, in which case the standard amount shall be 99 percent of the average retail market price. The standard amount may be increased to 100 percent if a person demonstrates to the program administrator that the person is unable to pay the matching amount.

37.2(2) Voucher use. The recipient of a voucher may purchase equipment from any vendor who will accept the voucher and may apply the voucher amount toward purchase of the brand and model of indicated equipment as the recipient chooses. A bill of sale for equipment purchased prior to the issuance of a voucher shall not be reimbursed.

37.2(3) Term. The vouchers shall provide for a 40-day period to present the voucher to the vendor. The vendor, upon presentation of the voucher, shall have 60 days to complete the sale and delivery of the equipment and to return the voucher to the program administrator. The program administrator shall have 20 days to process and return the voucher to the board for payment. The program administrator, for good cause shown, may extend either the 40- or 60-day deadline, provided the voucher is returned to the board for payment within 120 days from the issuance of the voucher. Except for good cause shown, the vendor will not be reimbursed for a voucher issued more than 120 days before the voucher is returned to the board for payment.

37.2(4) Payment. The voucher is not a negotiable instrument. Upon presentation of documentation by the vendor as required by the board, including but not limited to a bill of sale showing an amount due no greater than the voucher amount, the vendor will be issued a state warrant for the amount due.

199—37.3(477C) Eligibility. To be eligible to receive a voucher for equipment under the program, a person must satisfy the following standards. Applications will be processed in queue as determined by the program administrator. No person will be entitled to equipment at a particular time merely because that person meets the eligibility requirements. Additional vouchers will not be issued during a period if unpaid vouchers are outstanding for the remaining funds budgeted for the period.

37.3(1) The applicant's need for the equipment must be verified by an appropriate professional, including but not limited to a licensed physician; certified teacher in the fields of hearing, speech, or visual impairment; speech pathologist; audiologist; or an appropriate state or federal agency representative, as part of the initial application. At the time of reapplication for equipment, the applicant must submit a statement certifying the applicant's condition has not changed to the extent that a different type of equipment is needed. If an applicant's condition has changed to the extent that a different type of equipment is needed from that originally received, the applicant's need must be verified by an appropriate professional.

37.3(2) The applicant must have telephone service available to the applicant's Iowa residence or must have applied for telephone service to the Iowa residence.

37.3(3) The applicant must be an individual.

37.3(4) The applicant must be at least five years of age or demonstrate an ability to use the equipment requested. No demonstration is required for those five years of age and older.

37.3(5) The applicant will be limited to a voucher for one type of equipment or equipment package. If there are individuals in the same household who have different communication impairments that require different types of assistive telecommunications equipment, the individuals may make a joint or separate request to the equipment distribution program administrator. The administrator may grant those portions of the requests that satisfy the eligibility requirements in this rule.

37.3(6) Equipment may be replaced under the program by reapplication as appropriate. Reapplication will be limited by a five-year waiting period. The reapplication period may be shortened by the program administrator for good cause shown.

37.3(7) An applicant must agree to cooperate with studies to evaluate the effectiveness of the program.

37.3(8) An applicant's gross household income must be less than \$57,000 for a family of four. Household numbers above or below four will increase or decrease that amount in \$9,000 increments.

199—37.4(477C) Equipment. The board will authorize the types of equipment to be distributed through the program, including but not limited to telecommunications devices for the deaf with printers, signalers, amplifiers, computer software, and a limited number of telecommunications devices for the deaf/blind.

199—37.5(477C) Complaints. All complaints concerning the equipment distribution program will be resolved pursuant to the following:

37.5(1) The program administrator will make determinations concerning matters such as eligibility, type of equipment for particular applicants, or reimbursement of vendors.

a. The administrator, after requiring interested persons to state verbally or in writing any complaint or dispute arising under the equipment distribution program, shall attempt to settle the matter informally within 45 days.

b. Should the informal dispute resolution process fail, the complaint may be submitted to the board by the complainant and will be processed by the project manager as provided for utility customers in 199 IAC 6. The complaint will be directed to the program administrator with a copy to the consumer advocate. The board staff assigned to the equipment distribution program will then issue a proposed resolution as defined in 199 IAC 6.4(476).

c. The proposed resolution shall include a description of the facts involved in the dispute and a clear statement of the proposed resolution.

d. The proposed resolution shall also give notice that any interested person dissatisfied with the proposed resolution has 14 days after the issuance of the proposed resolution to file a written request for formal complaint proceedings before the Iowa Utilities Board, 350 Maple Street, Des Moines, Iowa 50319-0069. If no timely request for formal complaint proceedings is filed, the proposed resolution shall be deemed binding on all interested persons served with the proposed resolution. The request for formal complaint proceedings shall be considered as filed on the date of the United States Postal Service postmark or the date personal service is made.

37.5(2) The request for formal complaint proceedings shall explain why the proposed resolution should be modified or rejected and propose an alternate resolution, including any temporary relief desired. Copies of the request shall be mailed to any other persons served with the proposed resolution.

37.5(3) Upon receipt of a request for formal complaint proceedings, the board shall consider whether formal complaint proceedings should be initiated and issue an order. The request shall be granted if the board determines there is any reasonable ground for investigating the complaint. If the board denies formal complaint proceedings, a party may file a petition for judicial review either in the Polk County district court or in the district court for the county in which the party resides or has its principal place of business.

37.5(4) When a complaint is docketed as a formal proceeding, the procedures set forth in 199—Chapter 7 will apply.

These rules are intended to implement Iowa Code section 477C.4.

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